

EXHIBIT 24  
DATE 1-18-07  
HB 2

Good Morning....Madame Chairman and members of the committee.  
My name is Hebbard Blesius ; I live in Livingston. I'm a Board member of Counterpoint, a provider of services to individuals with disabilities in Livingston.

I am speaking to you today to express serious concern regarding the funding for community services for people with developmental disabilities.

Park County is experiencing strong economic development that has increased the entry level wage in our community to about \$15 per hour in some lines of work.

Counterpoint's entry level wage is \$8.70 an hour. We cannot compete. From March to November our direct care staff vacancy rate has been between approximately 20 and 30%. We are clearly in a crisis where our services to our clients suffer and our staff suffers.

In early 2006 the Developmental Disabilities Program, or DDP, asked providers for their actual costs per year of operating services. DDP found the cost of providing these services exceeded BY FAR what is provided by the state and Medicaid contract reimbursements. This resulted in the DDP submitting a request for an increase of 30 million in funding for the next biennium.

THIS REQUEST WAS ONE OF THE HIGHEST PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS MADE TO THE GOVERNORS OFFICE BY THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES.

I respect the Governor's budget suggestion of \$18 million, but I must respectfully urge the committee to fund community developmental disabilities programs at the 30 million level requested by the DPHHS.

In addition to the 30 million increase for these services I also support the 11.4 million earmarked in the Governor's budget for people who are waiting for services. This too needs to be funded, but in addition.

People with disabilities in Montana require and deserve services and supports from qualified well - trained staff. This will only happen if this crisis in funding is adequately addressed now. We're on a slippery slope.

Thank you very much for your help.